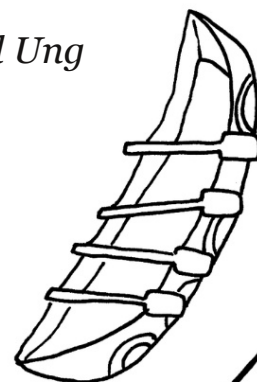
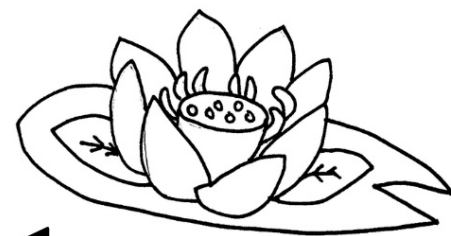
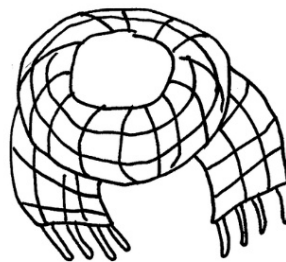
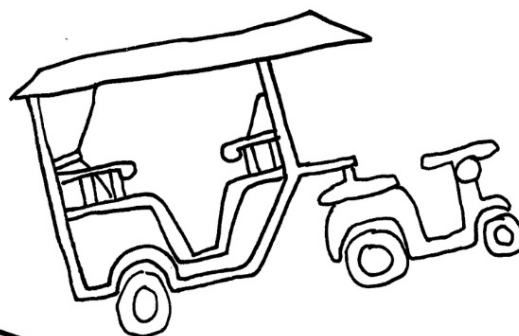
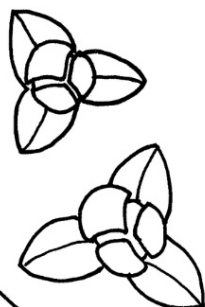
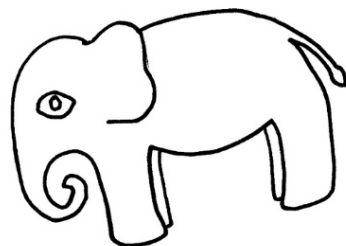
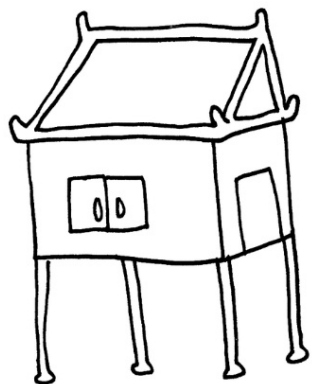


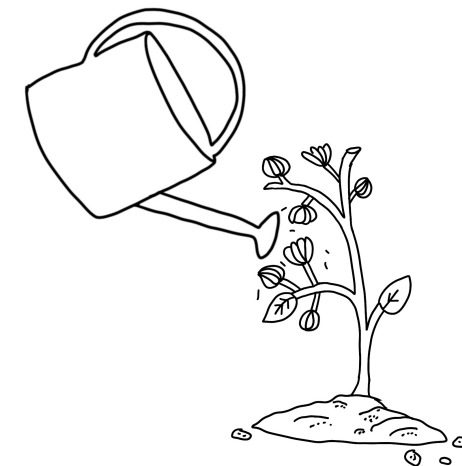


Our Cambodia: a coloring book for selfcare

Written and illustrated by Keomorakod Ung



Our Cambodia: a coloring book for selfcare



Written and illustrated by Keomorakod Ung

Contents

Introduction.....

5

Why color? The benefits of coloring.....

6

Coloring sessions with ISPP students.....

7

The coloring designs

Personal places.....

9

Culture and daily life.....

27

Bibiliography.....

42

Acknowledgements.....

44

Introduction

As we approach the end of high school, the workload seems to pile on more and more. I, like many other students and teenagers in our community, often prioritize work more than our own personal health. In a survey I carried out with 16 ISPP students aged between 15-16 years old, only 37.5% of respondents cited practicing self care more than two times a week.

Stress is not always necessarily bad; it gives you the focus, motivation and energy to tackle a challenge but stress may cause problems when it is accumulative, persistent and more than you can cope with.

We are more likely to be able to effectively manage stress when at our best mentally and physically, which is why self care is so important in helping us stay emotionally resilient. Self care, as defined by the Oxford Languages Dictionary, is...

“the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.”

The pandemic has evidently changed our lives a lot, it can be stressful and overwhelming adjusting to new routines like online school and quarantine. It is especially important to practice self care during this time when we’re cooped up at home. Through this book I would like to share a self-care practice with you, coloring in.

This book will detail the benefits of coloring and the successes of coloring sessions with 10th grade ISPP students, and also include 15 coloring designs with a Cambodian theme to them to share a part of my identity, and the experiences of some of the ISPP secondary student community with you.



Why color?

1.

It is mindful

Coloring engages both hemispheres of the brain, the left hemisphere helps us stay within the lines whilst the right side exercises creativity (Miller). This fills our brain with activity requiring us to focus on the present and help suppress ruminating thoughts. Our brains cannot think of multiple things at once, we become overwhelmed when our mind bounces off one thing to another, and so practicing coloring keeps us mindful and focused (Miller).

3.

Be “in the zone”

Art therapist Marygrace Berberian, the director of New York University's "Art Therapy in Schools" program attributes the theory of flow with coloring. Flow as coined by positive psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's is

“A state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it.”

The mindful nature of coloring and its attributes of inducing focus, being simple enough that the person has confidence in completing it, and timelessness all attribute to flow (Roston).

2. It is less overwhelming than drawing

A study done in 2005 by Knox College with undergraduate students found that structured coloring with patterns were more effective at reducing anxiety than free-form drawing.

The designs provide structure as opposed to drawing freely; the free drawing participants took pauses throughout as they didn't know where to start, this could've been anxiety-inducing itself (Curry and Kasser 84).

Coloring does not require artistic skill or experience; it is something we can all do! It is complex enough to hold our attention but simple enough that it doesn't require excessive thinking, ensuring that we can all do it and feel a sense of mastery.

4. Relax your brain and body

The amygdala is a part of the brain that processes stress and threatening situations to trigger a flight or fight response (Hall).

Coloring can relax the amygdala because it is a harmless and calming activity, telling your brain that everything will be ok. A relaxed brain reduces the release of adrenaline, and its physical responses decrease as well; our heart rate and breathing slow. It is a snowball effect--our bodies relax, making our thoughts less frantic and vice versa, overall increasing relaxation (Miller).

Coloring sessions

I carried out coloring sessions over 5 weeks, from february 4th to March 13th with 6 10th grade girls between the ages 15-16. I was able to have two coloring sessions in person at school but due to the COVID-19 outbreak in February of 2021, they had to be continued online. Each participant colors a design that is 12.5cm x 12.5cm, half of the published size, for 20 minutes during lunch time every Tuesday and Thursday. They complete a google form before and after the session.

From these sessions I found that...

The participants reported feeling stressed **85%** of the time throughout those 4 weeks. This was **100%** of the time due to schoolwork.

70% of participants felt very stressed (on a scale of 1-4, 4 being the most extreme) before the coloring session.

On average, **75%** of participants felt their initial moderate and or extreme stress decrease to a 1 after the coloring session.

After coloring for 5 weeks...

50% of participants felt that it helped to greatly reduce their stress

66.7% of participants would consider coloring for self care in the long term

100% of participants felt more relaxed after coloring

100% of participants would recommend coloring for self care to their peers.

I have realized that self care is just as important as my work because it makes me more productive since my mind isn't all over the place when working.
- Amy, colored for 5 weeks

I think that over time, it made me feel a lot calmer, (it) made me have less on my mind.
- Arissa, colored for 5 weeks

Coloring is very calming but I think i might want to do something more active for selfcare.
- Kunvecheada, colored for 5 weeks

I think coloring was very enjoyable for me, it helped me stay calm and less stressed.
- Natascha, colored for 4 weeks

I felt happier because it allowed me to think of something else other than my stressful work at that time.
- Rebecca, colored for 4 weeks

Coloring made me more cautious of my negative emotions because it was alone time. I was less overwhelmed after the emotion “bubble” burst.
- Tara, colored for 5 weeks

Personal Places

The following coloring designs are based on responses from the ISPP community to the question "What location or place in Cambodia makes you feel the most calm and peaceful?". The 8 respondents ranging from grade 8 to grade 11 shared their favorite places to be in and I've interpreted their anecdotes into a coloring page for you to color and connect with.

Kep Beach

Arisa S. *I find the beaches very calming because of the atmosphere and vibe that it gives. The sound of crashing waves and great scenery allows you to be at peace as well as the nice breeze.*

The Kep beach was the first place that I travelled within Cambodia when I moved here and was a memorable experience especially with their delicious seafood.



The Central Market

Rebecca L. *I enjoy going to the Central market as i used to go when i was younger with my nanny, my favorite part of the market is the fruit section because it didn't smell like fish.*

I used to go nearly every weekend and sometime throughout the week but not as of recently because the workload given is much more, I have a lot less time to go with her. The market is especially peaceful early in the morning at the food court that is usually bare and only filled with the candied smell of dessert puddings. So it is a sweet memory and reminds me of a time where my life was stress free.



Ty Mean L. *It makes me feel relaxed and calm as if I was the only person living in this world. And made me feel really connected with the nature and environment.*

Varnika G. *The quietness really helps me forget about my worries and focus on the view and the breeze instead.*

Victoria L. *I picked that place as it is associated with good vacation memories. I love nature especially the elephants and flowers , it helps me be at peace.*

*Plants and fungi depicted are referenced from a Khmer Times article



The National Museum

Vichetta E. *This place is personal to me because I often go with my family on the weekends. There are many cafes and shops within the area and so it is nice to explore.*

I really like the garden and it makes me content being surrounded by these tall and windy trees and the fish pond. It seems like the world really slows down there as you sit on the steps and gaze at the trees in front of you, there is really no pressure or stress.



Ta Phrom Temple

Kate T. Not only do I have good memories and holidays in (this place) but I feel it just takes you away from the business and allows you to think and relax and spend quality time with yourself or others.

Lucy C. It is very calming and can help me feel less stressed or just feel happier. It's beautiful and it reminds me that even though lots of things aren't going great in the world, theres still some very beautiful and peaceful places.



Wat Phnom

Kelly N. Wat Phnom is a very nostalgic place for me. My siblings and i used to rollerskate in the garden and or go to the playground nearby. There is a very serene atmosphere and is an important place of worship for my family and culture, it brings my parents peace and comfort when they visit and pray.

Lisa C. Wat Phnom is very peaceful and a perfect place to take an afternoon stroll through its gardens and the monkeys are very cute!



22

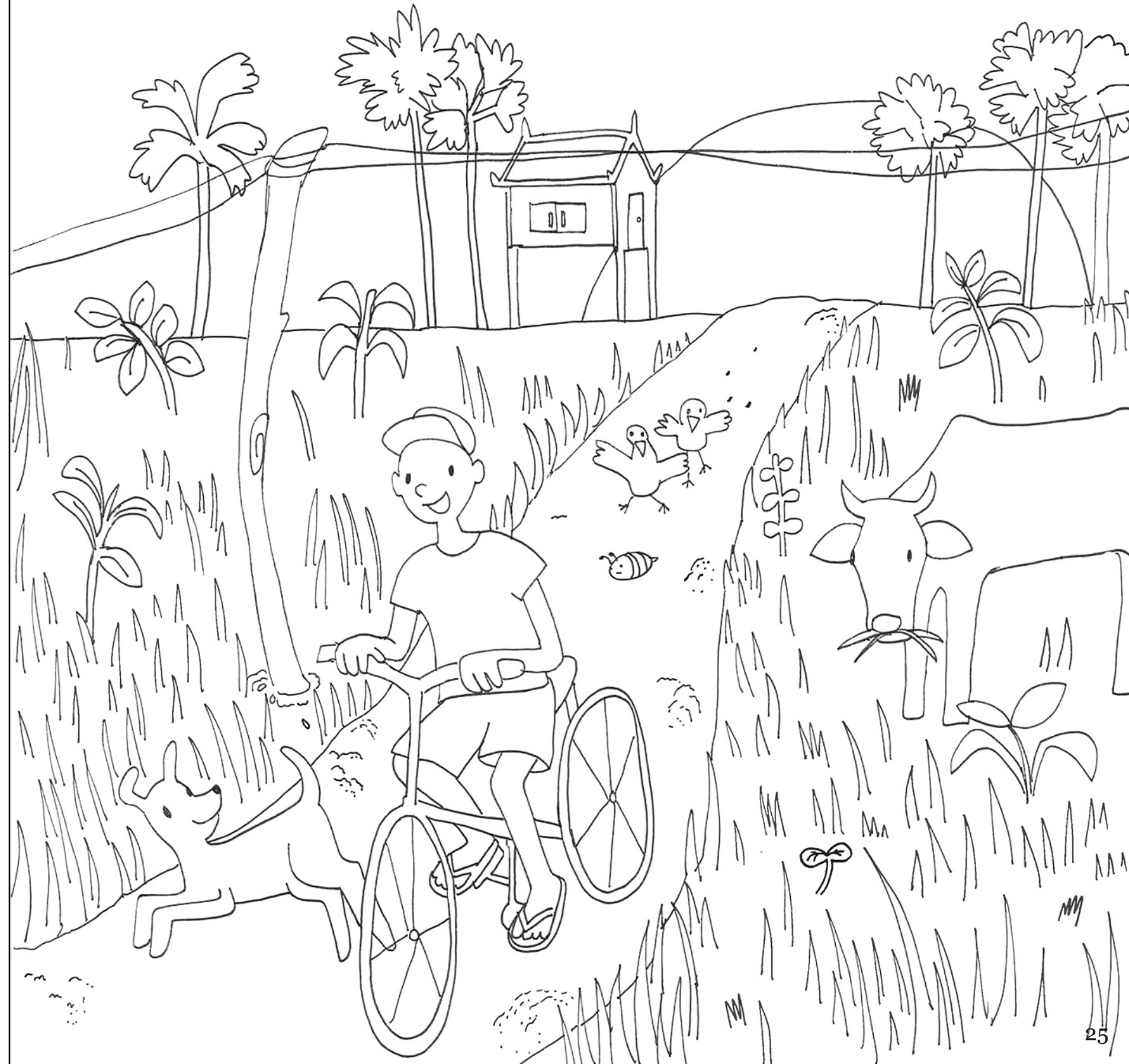
Zi Liang W. *I enjoy the peacefulness of sitting by the river and watching the boats go by. The "Bopha Titanic Restaurant" on the riverside was the first restaurant i went to when i first came to Cambodia and was where i first tried Khmer food. The fish amok reminded me a lot of one of my favorite Malay dishes, fish head curry.*



The countryside

Amy U. *The countryside and its sea of green rice fields is a nice change from the buildings and skyscrapers we see popping up in the city. It makes me feel calm to be outdoors, it's a nice distraction and break from my phone and social media which can be overwhelming because of everything that is happening in the world.*

Jo Yü W. *I enjoy looking out the window on the road during trips to the provinces and seeing the scenery change.*



Culture and daily life

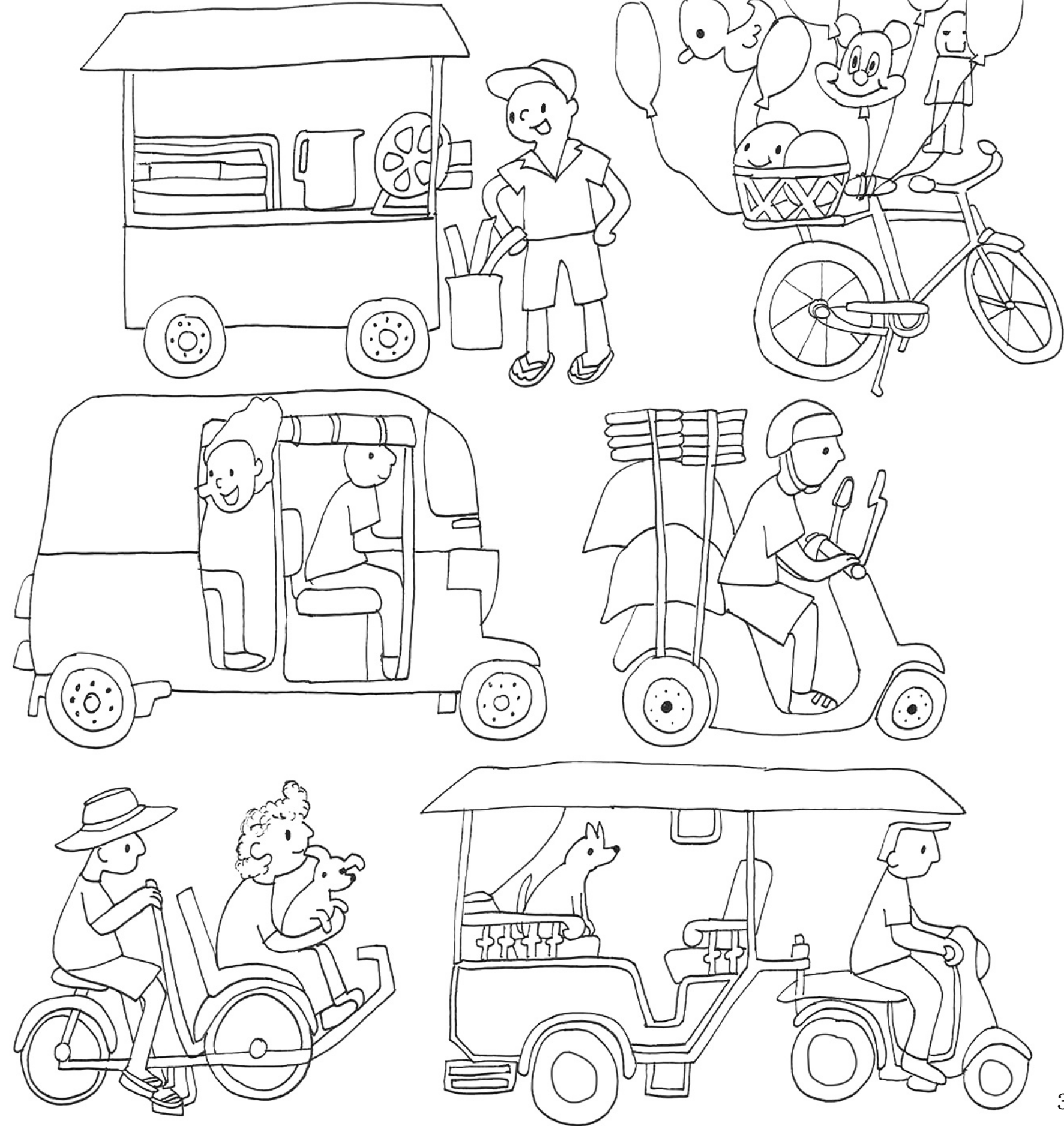
The following designs are based on my personal connections as a Cambodian and having lived here for my whole life. These designs are important to me because they are based on memories i've had with family and or are important parts of Cambodian culture.

Flowers in the city

My mom and I enjoy biking around the Wat Phnom area on the weekends for a nice break from work, it's one of her forms of self care and I've grown to love it too. We enjoy doing this during the warmer months as the tall flowering trees shield us away from the harsh sun...



...Sometimes we'd bike all the way to the independence monument where we would buy sugar cane juice and I'd beg for a power ranger balloon from the vendors. I love seeing the diverse array of vehicles on the streets and the new way people are fitting sacks of rice on their motos. I probably wouldn't notice this if i were in a car and so it is a nice break from both schoolwork and my phone.



Water festival

Water festival is one of many national holidays in Cambodia and one of my personal favorites. It was first celebrated in the 12th century to appease the river divinities and ensure a good harvest of fish and rice. There is a full moon on the second night and offerings are made to the moon rabbit to bring good luck and happiness. The rabbit is believed to be a reincarnation of Buddha. My favorite part of this holiday is eating the traditional snack of pounded flattened rice with banana.

The Tonle Sap riverside is especially busy during this time of year as people flock to watch the boat races. I watch the races on tv at home with my family and cheer on the team from my dad's hometown of Kampong Cham.



34

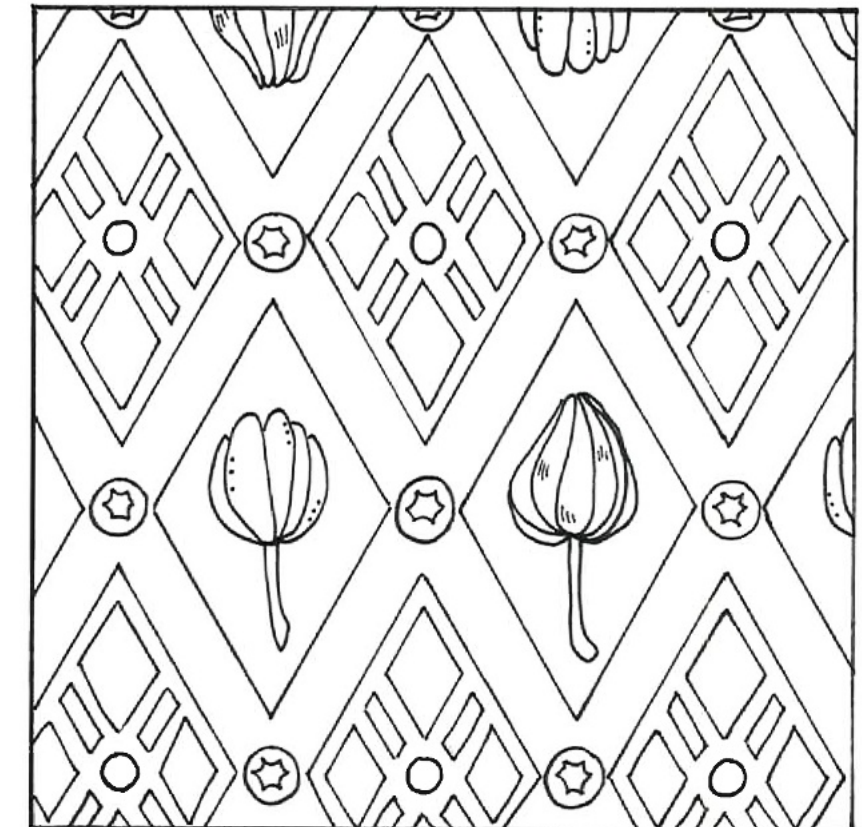
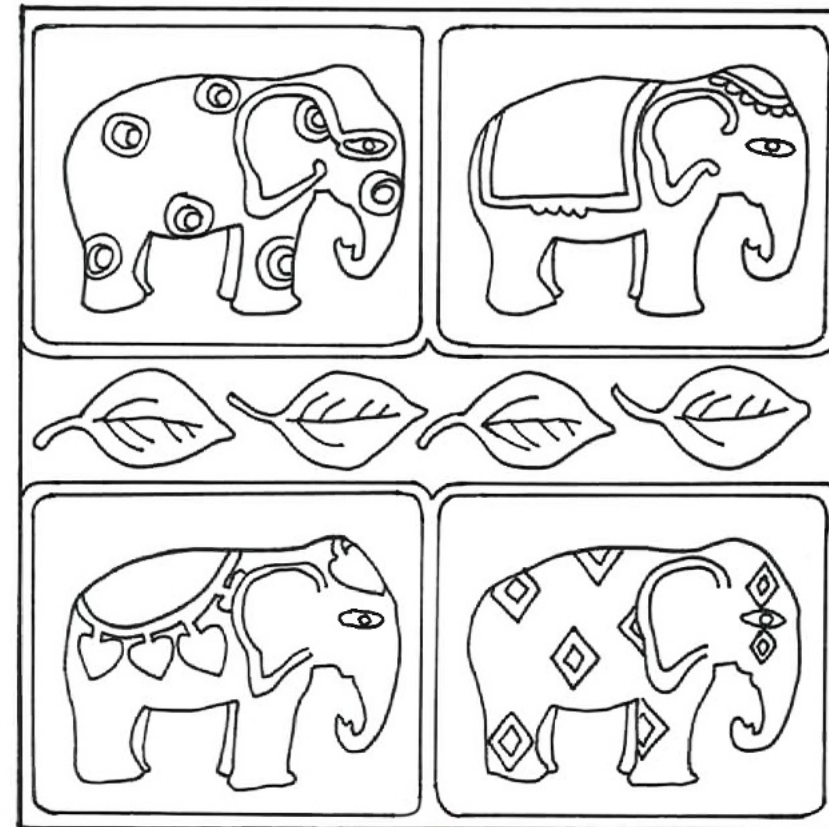
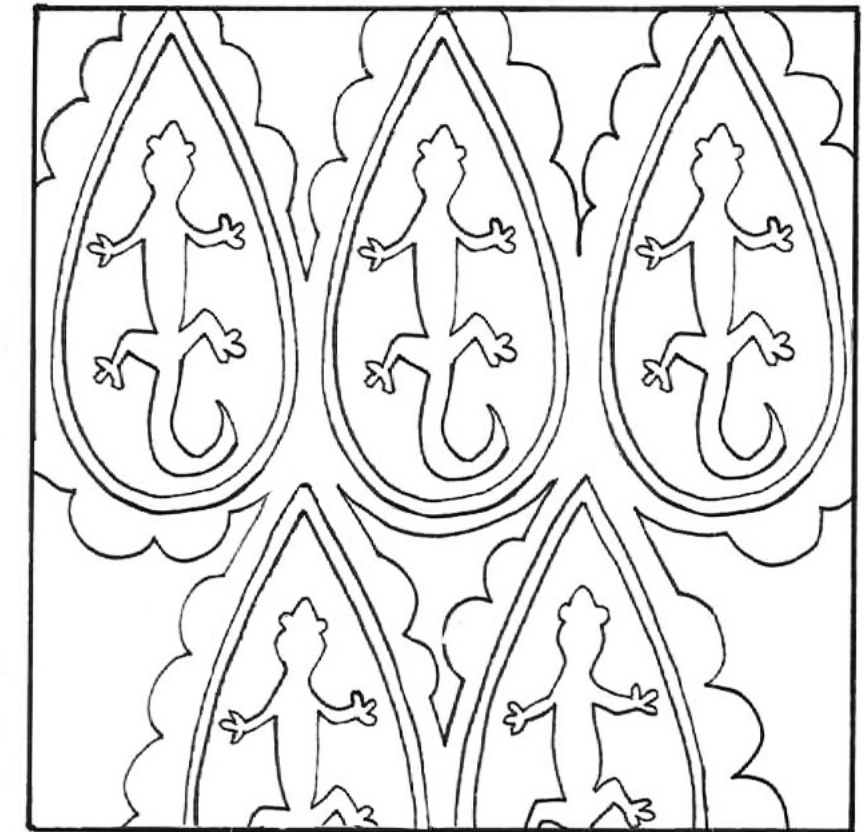
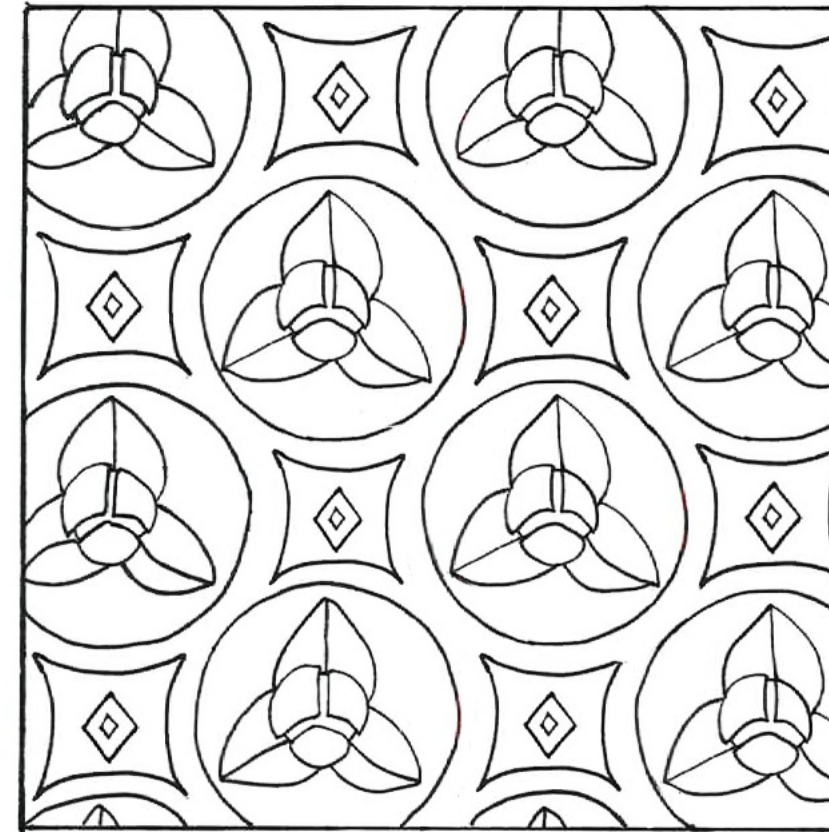
35



Hol Pidan

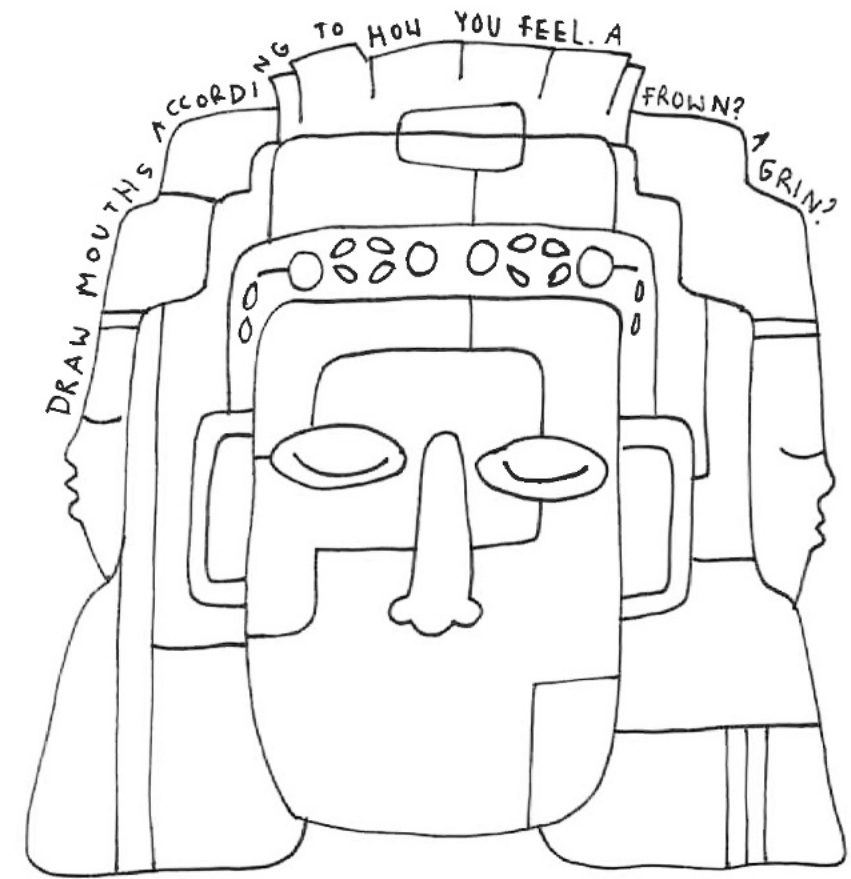
Silk weaving is one of the many forms of traditional Cambodian art and of the few that are wearable. Silk is dyed naturally with plants or insects and is woven on ancient looms to form intricate patterns that can be hung as tapestries or cut and sewn into skirts, or dresses for special occasions.

My grandma has always played an important role in my life, i always spent lots of time with her ever since i was young. She especially likes going to the silk shops. She sews skirts herself for my mom,aunt and i to wear to the pagoda on our birthdays and during holidays like Khmer New Year and Pchum Ben. This page was inspired by Hol Pidan as it is very significant to khmer culture however now lacks enough experienced people to continue the tradition.



Bayon faces

Everytime my family and I visit Siem Reap, it is customary that we visit the Bayon temple which is less popular and crowded. We would go early in the morning and or during sunset where the sun was low in the sky which illuminated the intricate carvings and bas reliefs of the temple. The carvings tell stories about Angkorian daily life such as market and farming scenes which reflect life nowadays too. The atmosphere is very serene and peaceful and I hope to visit again after the pandemic.



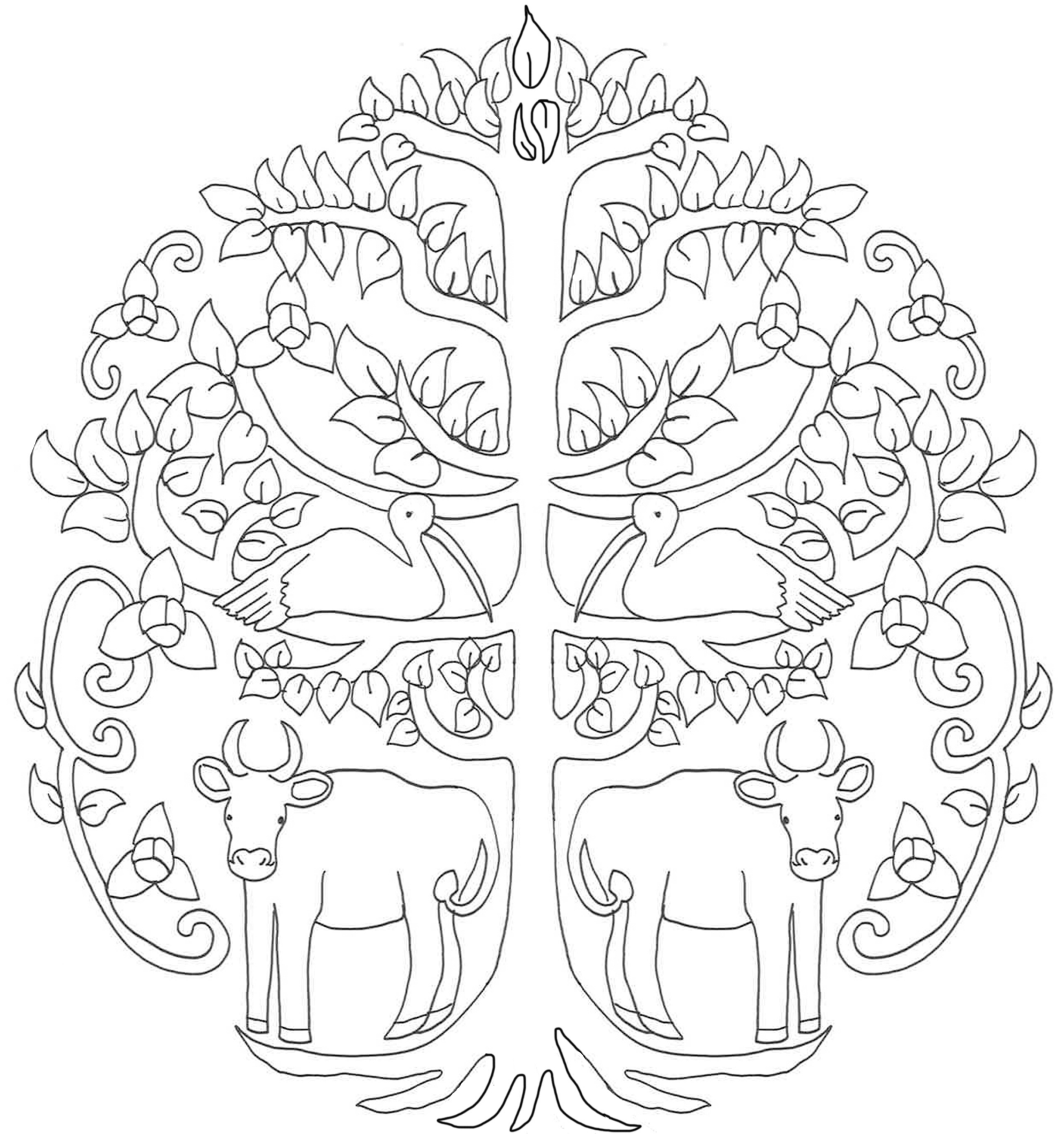
Endangered animals

We started learning about the importance of wildlife conservation in grade 2 and it has always been a prevalent topic throughout the years, that is becoming increasingly more important with the threat of climate change.

The kouprey and giant ibis are both national symbols of Cambodia but kouprey were last seen in the 1960s and the giant ibis are critically endangered from the constant threat of poaching for the illegal wildlife trade.

The kouprey are believed to embody the resilience of Cambodia throughout the Khmer empire and during the 1970s genocide.

The giant ibis's morning calls ring throughout the countryside and are a reminder for the farmers to start working, agriculture is still one of the primary sources of income for the majority of the population and a great contributor to the country's GDP.



Bibliography

Blain, Kunvecheada, et al. Interview. Conducted by Keomorakod Ung, 21 Mar. 2021.
This interview was done via google form. Questions were asked about the coloring session experience and how the participants felt before and after.

Cazzola, Lisa, et al. Interview. Conducted by Keomorakod Ung, 4 Nov. 2020.
Google form survey to answer the question "What place/location in Cambodia makes you feel the most peaceful and calm?"

Curry, Nancy A., and Tim Kasser. Can Coloring Mandalas Reduce Anxiety. Galesburg, Illinois, Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association, 22 Feb. 2005. American Art Therapy Association, files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ688443.pdf. Accessed 21 Mar. 2021.

Hall, Karyn. "Self-Soothing: Calming the Amygdala and Reducing the Effects of Trauma." Psych Central, Red Ventures Company, Apr. 2012, psychcentral.com/blog/emotionally-sensitive/2012/04/self-soothing-calming-the-amgydala#1. Accessed 21 Mar. 2021.

ISPP Secondary School Student community. Interview. Conducted by Keomorakod Ung, 5 Oct. 2020. Self care within the ISPP community: Do students practice it?

Kben and Hol. "Cambodian Craftsmanship - the Art of Traditional Weaving." Kbenhol.com, Kben and Hol, 8 Mar. 2017, www.kbenhol.com/blogs/blog/cambodian-craftsmanship-the-art-of-silk-production-and-weaving. Accessed 21 Mar. 2021.

Kunthear, Mom. "Rare Plants Found in Mondukiri." Khmer Times, 4 Jan. 2018, www.khmertimeskh.com/99922/rare-plants-found-mondulkiri/. Accessed 21 Mar. 2021.

Martinez, Nikki, Psy.d LCPC. "7 Reasons Adult Coloring Books Are Great for Your Mental, Emotional and Intellectual Health." Huff Post, version 2, 24 Nov. 2016, www.huffpost.com/entry/7-reasons-adult-coloring-books-are-great-for-your-mental-emotional-and-intellectu al-health_b_8626136. Accessed 21 Mar. 2021.

Miller, Kori D. "The Psychology and Theory behind Flow." Positive Psychology, 10 Dec. 2020, positivepsychology.com/theory-psychology-flow/. Accessed 21 Mar. 2021.

Phon, Pauline Dy. "Wat Phnom." The Botanical Guide of the City of Phnom Penh, vol. 1, Phnom Penh, Ed. Funan, 2009, pp. 19-24. 1 vols.

Roston, Tom. "Why Grown-Ups Love Coloring Books Too." Ideas.ted.com, TED, 6 Mar. 2016, ideas.ted.com/why-grown-ups-love-coloring-books-too/. Accessed 21 Mar. 2021.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank Ms. Emma Raaflaub, for supervising this project, guiding me throughout and giving feedback. This book would not have existed without the many meetings we had. I want to thank my parents and aunt for believing in me and my mom for buying me the first coloring book i ever had. Thank you to my friends for supporting me, my peers for participating in my coloring sessions even from home during online school and the ISPP community for answering the surveys that helped to shape the features of the book in the first place.

I hope that this book has encouraged you to consider coloring in your free time and for self care and that you were able to connect with the designs in some way, either from its visuals, the anecdotes and the memories they possibly evoke.

Keomorakod Ung March 2021
23ungk@ispp.edu.kh

**All illustrations and page compositions were
drawn by Keomorakod Ung*

Connect with Cambodia in a new way through coloring in, a mindful selfcare practice! Take a dive into pages based on locations in Cambodia that are special to the ISPP secondary student community, scenes in daily life, patterns and more, through the eyes and stories of locals! The COVID-19 pandemic makes life a whole lot more stressful, try coloring in to wind down and reconnect with the memories and experiences you've already made in our host country!

